DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 330 652 SP 032 956

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TITLE Future Directions for the Preparation of University Supervisors.
PUB DATE Feb 90
NOTE 13p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Teacher Educators (New Orleans, LA, February 16-20, 1991).
PUB TYPE Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Education Courses; Elementary Secondary Education; Foundations of Education; Higher Education; Internship Programs; *Student Teacher Supervisors; Supervision; *Supervisor Qualifications; *Supervisory Training; Teacher Education Curriculum; *Teacher Educator Education; Teacher Educators
IDENTIFIERS Knowledge Base for Teaching

ABSTRACT

Analysis of the present preparation of the university supervisors of student teachers and examination of the essential knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes, and experiences required of supervisors produces two recommendations for preparing effective supervisors: an internship and successful completion of a course designed especially for university supervisors. Two primary variables have been equated with quality supervision: advanced training (doctoral degrees and higher rankings) and teaching experience. However, there is a need for additional formal preparation in supervision. Supervisors need two main bodies of knowledge to be effective. The first body of knowledge encompasses an understanding of how university/college policy affects the goals of the teacher education program, including clinical experiences. The second body of knowledge relates to the foundations of education. The two major skills supervisors need are effective interpersonal communication and the ability to appropriately use evaluation processes. Effective university supervisors should be required to have two major experiences: successful classroom teaching and an internship. (IAH)

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

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Paper Presented At The
Annual Meeting Of The

Association of Teacher Educators
New Orleans, Louisiana
February 16-20, 1991

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FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF UNIVERSITY SUPERVISORS

by

Dr. Debra J. Anderson

The purpose of this paper is to recommend directions for the preparation required of effective university supervisors. These recommendations are based upon (1) an analysis of the present preparation of supervisors and (2) an examination of essential knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes and experiences needed of effective supervisors.

An Analysis of the Preparation of University Supervisors

Literature which directly addresses the preparation required of effective university supervisors is almost nonexistent. Others have found this to be true of related topics such as the knowledge, beliefs and judgment criteria of supervisors (Simmons, 1988) or studies which concentrate wholly upon the university supervisor (Marrou, 1988).

One may speculate why this is so. University supervisors <u>are</u> teacher educators and according to Ducharme (1986):

> Little is known about "teacher educators," the higher education faculty responsible for teacher preparation. Reasons include the lack of a definition and consequent difficulty in identfying the population, scarcity of research on teacher education specifically, and inclusion of teacher educators in research on the education professoriate generally. (p.3)

Troyer (1986) lists a variety of reasons illustrating why the focus of research on teacher education has excluded teacher educators. She states:

> Perhaps we are fearful that common criticism of teacher education will be substantiated, or that additional criticism will be forthcoming as a result of new findings. Perhaps we are hesitant to consign a complex and divergent population with whom we identify so closely to the few lines of simplistic findings that may result from some research efforts or, perhaps we perceive research on teacher educators as less salient than other lines of educational inquiry. (p. 6)

Yet another reason for the lack of research literature on supervisors may be that "the perceived nature of supervision is a low priority task with little benefit in academia" (Simmons, 1988, p. 6). In other words, few in higher education, including some teacher educators, understand the complex nature and importance of supervision. This attitude is substantiated, in part, by data obtained from a national survey of preservice teacher education in the U.S. in 1978. Bowman (1978) reports:

> Teacher preparation institutions have often been accused (by their own students as well as by public school personnel) of showing a lack of concern for the comptency of supervisors of student teachers. (Simmons, 1988, p. 5)

In an era of increased accountability and supervision at all levels of education, one must question the priorites of teacher preparation institutions which continue to hold this view.

The acknowledged lack of literature and perceived interest on issues related to the preparation and competency of university supervisors does not imply the need for effective supervision is unimportant. Concern for the need for well prepared supervisors was declared in 1964 by Florence B. Stratemeyer who stated: "The college supervisor has a critical and central role in the program of teacher education; the assignment of that role should not be made lightly." A decade later, Abruscato (1972) warned:

> We must begin to prepare individuals who will serve intelligently as future supervisors. Our responsibility is, in part, that of establishing adequate procedures for the training of new supervisors so they will have the type of preparation that will be needed. (p. 147)

And, almost three decades later, Marrou (1988) asserted: "If teacher training institutions are going to prepare student teachers effectively for the classroom, they must first thoroughly prepare their first line of defense - their university supervisors" (p. 13). Agreeing with this assertion, Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) state:

> The need for outstanding university supervisors who balance the needs and interests of the student, the university, the K-12 school and our country, has never been greater. They are the link between institutions of higher learning and public and private schools. The strength of this very fragile link is determined by how well supervisors are prepared for their role. (in press)

Some teacher educators see a relationship between the preparation of university supervisors and the effectiveness of the student teaching program. For example, Marrou (1988) asserts: "Depending upon the quality of the university supervisor, the [student teaching] program is either strong or weak" (p. 18). And in referring to university supervisors, Simmons (1988) observes: "...the effectiveness of the student teaching experience can vary with individual characteristics of the person involved" (p. 7).

Those who agree with such assertions and observations are concerned about those faculty who supervise student teachers on either a part- or full-time basis and who have never been formally trained for their new role as supervisor. Elaborating upon the differences between the preparation of generalists and specialists, Simmons (1988) writes:

> After reviewing the few comparative studies on distinctions between clinical generalist and content area specialist approaches, McIntyre concluded that subject area specialists often have little or no training in supervision and are not usually viewed as being skillful, knowledgeable, available, or concerned as clinical generalist supervisors by student teachers and cooperating teachers. (p. 5)

Yet, no one should be misled to believe that all university supervisors have not had any formal preparation for their role. Many of us in teacher education, working as supervisors, know from conversing with colleagues across the nation at professional conferences, that many supervisors have had formal preparation in supervision and professional field experiences. Unfortunately, this information has not been extensively researched or documented.

Because of this lack of documentation, quality supervision has been equated with variables such as academic rank or teaching experience. For example, Solliday (1982) conducted a study in Illinois in 1980 to verify the role of the university supervisor in terms of duties, supervisory load and academic rank. He found 84% of the university supervisors had professional rankings, 13% were instructors and only 2% were lecturers or graduate assistants. Solliday concluded:

> These figures substantiate the belief that quality supervision (which can be provided by someone with advanced training and experience) is important to most of the institutions in Illinois, and refutes the off-hand belief that most university supervision is performed by graduate students. (p. 13)

In this study, Solliday equates quality supervision with advanced training and experience. But today, some new teacher educators have entered higher education with a higher academic rank than their colleagues could have negotiated ten years ago with the same amount of experience. New teacher educators may have advanced training, i.e. doctoral degrees and higher rankings; but they may not necessarily have the experience.

While Solliday's findings were true of Illinois institutions in 1980, and even though one cannot generalize the same held for other states at that time, the author suspects it was true for many.

But that was ten years ago. Since then enrollment in elementary and secondary teacher education programs has dramatically increased. However, decreased funding of teacher education programs and a smaller pool of eligible doctoral graduates has resulted in the hiring of nonqualified faculty to supervise student teachers. Unfortunately, supervision seems to be the first program trimmed under a tightening budget.

This brings us to a second variable which is equated with quality supervision - teaching experience. Although teaching experience is a very necessary and important qualification of well prepared university supervisors, it is not the only one. If those in a hiring position believe that teaching experience is the primary prerequisite for becoming a supervisor, their rationale may be that it is more convenient and less expensive to hire retired teachers and administrators or graduate assistants or substitute teachers for resident classroom teacher educators to supervise student teachers, rather than spending the time, energy and resources to search for full-time qualified supervisors or providing inservice for faculty or considering spending cuts in areas other than supervision.

Many graduate students, adjunct faculty and classroom teachers who have been hired to supervise student teachers today have not had any formal preparation in supervision. To illustrate the need for supervisory training, Liston and Zeichner (1988) describe problems encountered in their program. They state:

> ...the supervisors in the program are graduate students in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction who spend anywhere from one to five years working in the program. From our experience, it takes a few semesters to prepare supervisors to work in a program such as this, and particularly for them to develop the expertise to be effective in implementing the inquiry and reflective aspects of this program. Frequently, as soon as supervisors have begun to make sufficient progress in the development of supervisory and pedagogical strategies, they leave, and work must begin to prepare a new group of individuals for supervisory roles. (p. 42)

It is evident from this statement that not only do supervisors need to be prepared for their new role, but some do not remain in their supervisory positions for very long. My colleagues and I have also witnessed this coming and going of adjunct supervisors and graduate assistants in both small and large institutions. A high turnover of staff in any program does not usually reflect well upon it.

One wonders if those who make such personnel decisions for supervision programs have thought about the long-term consequences of their actions. Do they know: that "the quality of any teacher education program is at least partially dependent on the quality of its professoriate?" (Troyer, 1986, p. 6); that "their colleagues in the public schools now look for people who are highly knowledgeable in teacher education and who can articulate the process of becoming an effective teacher to those with whom they come in contact?" (Marrou, 1988, p. 18); that accountability of the amount and quality of supervisory assistance is a priority in many school-university partnerships? (Marrou, 1988); that not all "good" teachers and administrators can be effective university supervisors?; that student teaching is the single most important experience in the preservice teacher education program?; and, that the supervisory role is very complex and demanding?

The last question merits elaboration because the supervisory role has been ignored. Niemeyer and Moon (1987) believe, as does the author, that "supervision is not a linear activity, but involves reflection, introspection, intuition and an understanding of the dialectical nature of the role" (p. 6). "In theory and often in practice, the university supervisor is responsible for as many as fifty different and partially related tasks, teaching, evaluating and coordinating students and programs" (Nerenz, 1979, p. 471). Jones (1970) lists nine functions the supervisor must perform to help develop effective teachers: leader, interpreter, observer, counselor, analyst, evaluator, facilitator, clinician and humanitarian. In light of these complex responsibilities and functions, should minimally trained full-time and adjunct faculty and graduate assistants be allowed to supervise? Not if successful student teaching experiences and programs are the desired ends!

This view is supported by others in the field who see deficiencies in some supervisors. For example, Simmons (1988) found "supervisors themselves...often lack a specific knowledge base related to their responsibilities..." (p. 20). And, Scholl (1990) proposes:

> A program of inservice should be developed and carried out to update the university supervisor's knowledge base, skills and application techniques as they relate to instructional supervision of the student teaching process and the on-going training of cooperating teachers as instructional supervisors. Without special preparation in supervision, it is unlikely that the university can provide the knowledge, leadership or influence that is necessary to supervise the complex experience of student teaching. (p. 4)

Not only do teacher educators suggest that university supervisors need special inservice training, but some, like Scholl, propose that supervisors be primarily responsible for training cooperating teachers (Horton & Harvey, 1979; Oja, 1988). Since cooperating teachers supervise student teachers on a daily basis, they too, must be carefully prepared to supervise in a professional way (MacNaughton, Johns and Rogers, 1978). In limited and informal ways, many supervisors presently help cooperating teachers understand their role, responsibilities and program goals. However, if university supervisors are going to be charged with formally preparing cooperating teachers, supervisors themselves, first must have supervisory training.

Studies indicate that teacher educators desire inservice opportunities (Rush & Wood, 1982; Troyer, 1986; Uhlig & Haberman, 1987), but are limited by a "...lack of available time, excessive work load, inadequate finances, inconvenient dates, and inappropriate content" (Troyer, 1986, p. 9). Administrators might consider reallocating funds to provide appropriate inservice for temporary and full-time faculty who supervise student teachers and who have no formal preparation in supervision or professional field experiences.

An Examination of the Knowledge, Skills, Attitudes, Attributes and Experiences Required of Well Prepared University Supervisors

> The preparation of university supervisors cannot be taken lightly. Well prepared supervisors contribute to the development of well prepared beginning teachers who will eventually influence thousands. How student teachers interact with students, what values they pass on, what learnings they deem important--these and countless other attitudes are internalized during student teaching.
>
> Student teachers are always on someone else's turf. They are vulnerable. Perhaps this explains why they are so pliable, so capable of learning vast amounts of material in a short period, so receptive to life-shaping change and so in need of a well prepared university supervisor. This is a time when student teachers should be exposed to the best the university has to offer. (Anderson, Major & Mitchell, 1991, in press)

Well prepared university supervisors possess certain knowledge and have special skills, attitudes, attributes and experiences to work effectively with student teachers.

Knowledge

There are two main bodies of knowledge which university supervisors need to know to be effective. The first body of knowledge encompasses an understanding of how university/college policy affects the goals of the teacher education program including clinical experiences. Supervisors need to be familiar with such things as:

- the university/college mission statement,
- goals of the general education curriculum,
- general course offerings,
- the professional education curriculum,
- goals of the teacher education program,
- goals of clinical experiences,
- requirements for academic areas of specialization, and
- the range of licensure levels and special student teaching requirements for each teaching major and minor.

Knowledge of these areas is paramount to providing the best guidance and experiences for student teachers. Perhaps, the most important area, however, is knowledge of the content of professional education courses. This knowledge enables supervisors to help student teachers bridge the gap between theory learned in the university classroom and practice in the K-12 school.

Supervisors should also be able to answer student and cooperating teachers questions about issues related to academic policy, financial aid information and university/college resource programs.

A second body of knowledge which supervisors need to know is in the foundations of education. Knowledge of the philosophical, psychological and sociological foundations of education provide the theory from which supervisors may analyze and practice supervision. Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) agree. They state:

> We make intelligent and sound educational decisions only when we understand our own personal beliefs about education and teaching, and only when we know how knowledge of the foundation areas will influence the decisions we make as supervisors. (in press)

Knowledge of the philosophical foundations should include at minimum, an understanding of essentialism, progressivism, existentialism and humanism, since the majority of American public schools reflect these educational theories. Knowledge of the philosophical foundations enables supervisors to: understand school district purposes, aims and beliefs; understand the teaching practices and beliefs of each cooperating and student teacher; and help student teachers clarify their thoughts about planning, methodology, grading, discipline, rules, what they like about students and staff, how to work with parents, peers and fellow teachers, etc. University supervisors also need to understand their own philosophy since it guides everything one does from how one supervises/teaches, to how one plans, to how one interacts.

Knowledge of the psychological foundations of education should include what educational psychologists have learned about learning, learning styles, learner characteristics and needs, behavior and reinforcement, punishment, motivation, and measurement and evaluation. University supervisors need to understand how psychological principles are applied effectively to teaching and learning. These are areas in which supervisors also need to keep abreast of current research.

Knowledge of the sociological foundations of education should include traditional issues such as social class, status, prestige, inequality, race relations, deviant behavior, social components of the learning system, etc. It would be impossible for university supervisors to learn too much about these topics (Anderson, Major & Mitchell, 1991).

In addition, the preparation of supervisors "...must take into account the social concerns and societal trends..." (Marrou, 1988, p. 13). Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) elaborate on this aspect of preparation. They state:

> The existence of our pluralistic, democratic society depends upon what future teachers learn about gangs; ways students look at life; poverty; discrimination; prejudice; effective communication skills; and how human beings learn to use reason rather than force to resolve conflicts.
>
> University supervisors need to share their sociological knowledge, experience and insight with student teachers so they may become better observers of people, more tolerant and understanding of those from different backgrounds, and so they may inspire their students to better understand each other. (in press)

Other areas of knowledge which well prepared university supervisors need to know include: an understanding of adult learning theory and its application to working with student teachers; effective teaching research, practices and literature and application of these to instructional styles; an understanding of situational and developmental supervisory practices; and an understanding of the role of the profession in our society (Scholl, 1990).

Skills

University supervisors need special skills. Two major skills required are effective interpersonal communication and the ability to appropriately use evaluation processes. Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) elaborate on why supervisors need to be effective communicators. They state this is an important skill because:

> University supervisors spend nearly all their time communicating with K-12 administrators, cooperating teachers, student teachers and university personnel. Communication occurs while placing student teachers, conferencing with cooperating and student teachers, providing inservice, mediating between K-12 school personnel and student teachers, and serving as a liaison for the university. How the supervisor communicates with all these people and in all these situations is extremely important to the success of the student teaching program. (in press)

A second major skill necessary for effective supervision is appropriate use of evaluation processes. University supervisors engage in evaluation in several ways. First, supervisors themselves must select and use evaluation processes appropriate for evaluating each student teacher. Second, they inform cooperating teachers about available processes. And third, supervisors help cooperating teachers understand the university/college policy for assessing student teachers.

Supervisors also need to know how to help student teachers reflect upon their own teaching practices; write final evaluations; share their personal philosophy of evaluation with student and cooperating teachers; and objectively grade student teachers. An understanding of these and other responsibilities including legal parameters of evaluating student teachers is crucial.

Additional skills needed by university supervisors include those inferred from cooperating teachers' feedback. Marrou (1988) reports that cooperating teachers believe effective supervisors: are well organized (have clear expectations and guidelines); are informative; realistically assess student teachers' abilities and give helpful suggestions; set high standards for student teachers; promote successful partnerships between the student and cooperating teacher; make frequent visits; and share helpful teaching aids and techniques.

Attitudes

While there are many attitudes expressed by effective university supervisors, Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) address what they believe to be the five most important.

> The first is one of commitment to work with student teachers. One who has no desire to supervise obviously should not! Student teachers need and deserve dedicated individuals to help them through the most important and challenging time of their undergraduate careers.
>
> This attitude of commitment is important because it insures the supervisor will do all he or she can to provide a placement where student teachers feel accepted, trusted and psychologically safe; one where they can be successful and realize their potential.
>
> The second important attitude is that of acceptance. Student teachers can best feel acceptance if they are listened to with understanding and if the supervisor clearly demonstrates that he or she cares about what the student teacher says, feels and does.
>
> The third attitude is trust. Building a high level of trust can be accomplished during conferences and seminars, if an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance has been established. In such an atmosphere, student teachers can risk the self-disclosure necessary for analyzing their self-perceptions.
>
> The fourth attitude is openmindedness. If student teachers can be themselves in the presence of the supervisor, and feel they are not being prejudged, they will feel secure enough to honestly look at how others perceive them.
>
> And the last important attitude the university supervisor should possess is one of giving, especially, the giving of positive feedback. A supervisor's praise can inspire, encourage, make others feel worthwhile create a positive climate. (in press)

Attributes

Attributes of high quality university supervisors include: being conscientious, caring, empathetic, openminded, tactful and adaptable to many situations; and, having a good sense of hunor, a positive problem-solving attitude, and a healthy self-esteem (Marrou, 1988; Anderson, Major & Mitchell, 1991).

Experience

Effective university supervisors should be required to have two major experiences.. The first experience is successful classroom teaching at the appropriate elementary and/or secondary levels. Many supervisors are required to have at least three years of teaching experience. Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) describe why teaching experience is important. They state:

> This is a sound practice because teaching helps the supervisor understand what it takes to be a full-time teacher: the ability to plan, instruct, evaluate, budget, work with colleagues, cooperate with parents, discipline children, take atendance, collect lunch money, chaperone a dance, supervise the lunchroom, and on and on. (in press)

A second experience every new supervisor should have is an internship. This intership is one of two recommendations made for future directions of the preparation of university supervisors.

Recommendations for Future Directions of the Preparation of University Supervisors

Based upon an analysis of the present preparation and an examination of essential knowledge, skills, attitudes, attributes and experiences required of supervisors, two recommendations for preparing them to be effective supervisors of student teachers are (1) an internship, and (2) successful completion of a course designed especially for university supervisors.

Internship

As stated earlier, many adjunct and full-time faculty and graduate assistants who are responsible for supervising student teachers, have not had any formal preparation for this role. One recommendation for an improvement in the preparation of university supervisors is an internship which requires novices to work with veterans. Internship characteristics and objectives are described by Anderson, Major and Mitchell (1991) as follows:

> An internship is as valuable to the preparation of the university supervisor as student teaching is to the education major and the residency is to the medical student. Novice supervisors can learn much from a veteran who has successfully supervised/taught. Veterans understand philosophies of the communities in which student teachers teach and they know which schools and cooperating teachers provide excellent experiences.
>
> Patterning the clinical experience model, the novice should observe the veteran at work and vice versa. Periodic conferences should be held so the novice can, among other things, reflect, analyze, learn about herself and ask questions.
>
> The internship should be one which allows a new teacher educator to develop the skills and the self-confidence necessary to become an effective supervisor. (in press)

Successful implementation of such an internship requires that veteran supervisors be given released time so they can adequately supervise novices.

Formal Course

A second recommendation for the preparation of university supervisors who have no formal training in supervision is the completion of a course titled "Supervision of Student Teaching." Such a course should be taught by a successful veteran supervisor. The following topics might be considered for discussion:

- Supervisory Theory and History
- Public Relations and Effective Communication
- How to Observe Student Teachers
- How to Evaluate Student Teachers
- How to Conduct Effective Conferences
- How to Conduct Effective Seminars
- How to Work with First Time Cooperating Teachers
- Strategies for Interviewing, Placing and Orienting Student Teachers

- Roles and Responsibilities of University Supervisors, Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers
- Common Concerns of University Supervisors, Cooperating Teachers and Student Teachers
- Adult Learning Theory
- Leadership (for training cooperating teachers)
- How University/College Policy Affects the Teacher Education Program
- Update on Research in Teacher Education

In conclusion, schools, colleges and departments of education are charged with acknowledging the following: that competent university supervisors are needed as much as competent professors in other academic areas and as much as competent K-12 educators; that effective supervisors need certain knowledge and special skills, attitudes, attributes and experiences; and that measures must be taken to insure those faculty responsible for supervising student teachers are given inservice on supervision. Two recommendations for preparing university supervisors who have no formal training in supervision are (1) the completion of an internship and (2) a special course on supervising student teachers.

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